

City of Wolverhampton Council

SCHOOLS' FORUM

Date	29 September 2022
Report title	Future Resourcing for Wolverhampton Exploitation and Missing Hub
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Summary

This paper has been produced to request a dedicated education post within the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub. Given the potential benefits to having a dedicated education role with the Hub, the proposal is to establish a post to be initially funded for 12 months out of the centrally retained Dedicated Schools' Grant. A report will then be presented back to Schools' Forum in June 2023 to evidence the impact of the post and agree longer term funding.

Decisions:

Members of Schools' Forum are asked to:

1. Agree for a dedicated education post to be established within the Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub and for this to be funded for 12 months from the centrally retained Dedicated Schools' Grant at a cost of £45,500.
2. Agree to receive an update report detailing the impact of the dedicated post in June 2023 in order to inform longer term funding for the post.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Wolverhampton Partnership Exploitation and Missing Hub was established on 22 February 2021 and brings together services that have contact with children and young people who are at risk of exploitation, to make use of their combined knowledge to increase their safety and protection.
- 1.2 Whilst the Hub has predominantly focused on children and young people, there have been discussions and activities regarding vulnerable adults who are at risk of or experiencing exploitation. This is an area of work that is developing including the introduction of an adult exploitation screening tool, adult MASH exploitation pathway and ongoing discussions regarding the possibility of increasing existing resources in the hub to support the work around exploited adults.
- 1.3 The Hub facilitates daily briefings which bring together a range of safeguarding professionals including representatives from Early Intervention; Children's Social Care; West Midlands Police; Education; Pupil Referral Unit; Community Safety Partnership; Adult Social Care; Violence Reduction Unit; Children's Services Placement Team; Health and third sector representatives.
- 1.4 The purpose of the daily briefing is to review all overnight missing episodes, ensure that the Hub is aware of anything significant that may have occurred the day before or overnight; facilitate multi-agency information sharing and gathering; decision-making; disruption planning; and intervention/support required around those individuals/places where there are exploitation concerns.
- 1.5 The Hub also has a wider role in leading and facilitating the broader exploitation structure which includes the Child Exploitation Missing Operational Group (CEMOG); Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meetings (MACE); Professionals' Meetings for groups of children and young people identified as at risk of or experiencing exploitation; contributing to Strategy meetings; providing information and intelligence to support MASH referrals; single point of contact for advice and information on exploitation; provision of multi-agency and single agency training; quality assurance process for the whole exploitation system; and ultimately co-ordinating the local operational and strategic response to all forms of exploitation.

2.0 Progress

- 2.1 A report presented to Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together (WST) in September 2021 clearly set out a range of data which demonstrated that since the introduction of a whole system response to exploitation and specifically since the Hub has been established, the number of young people and adults identified as being at risk of or experiencing exploitation has significantly increased. This has led to an increased demand on the Core Team within the Hub which initially consisted of a Hub Manager; Missing Returns Officer; Partnership Strategic Co-ordinator; Partnership Analyst; and a Police Team which consists of one Sergeant; four Police Constables; and two Intel Officers.

- 2.2 Since the Exploitation Hub was introduced, there has been a steady increase in the number of young people being identified and discussed. Between February 2021 and May 2022, 418 screening tools have been received and considered; 143 young people have been identified to have met the threshold for MACE, with 84 of these young people have risk levels reduced and the remainder still being supported. The increase in young people being supported via MACE meetings represents a 63% increase since the Hub went live.
- 2.3 In addition, there has also been a significant increase in reported Missing episodes. The average number of missing episodes per month during 2019 was 40, during 2021 the average was 67 with a peak of 98 in December. The average per month so far in 2022 is 71. All Missing Episodes are discussed in the daily briefing.
- 2.4 When the Hub was launched the core team initially consisted of:
- Local Authority Exploitation Hub Manager (Local Authority funding)
 - Strategic Partnership Exploitation Co-ordinator (Local Authority funding)
 - Missing Returns Officer (Local Authority funding)
 - Part-Time MACE Chair (Local Authority funding)
 - Part-Time Information Analyst (*WST funding)
 - Police – One Sergeant, four Police Constables (PCs) and two Intel Officers (Police funding)
- 2.5 Following an increase in demand and a review of the impact of the Hub, a decision was made in May 2022 for the Local Authority to increase its resourcing within the Hub. Additional investment of approximately £200,000 has been agreed in order to support the establishment of more specialist posts. This includes an additional Missing Return Officer, an additional Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meeting chair, a Children's Social Worker, an Adult Social Worker and an Early Intervention worker.

3.0 Education Representation in the Hub

- 3.1 The Education Inclusion Team are represented in most daily briefings and are an invaluable resource in providing information on individuals in terms of which school they attend, their attendance and behaviour record, etc.
- 3.2 An Education representative working in the core team would allow a more joined up and consistent approach between the different services and education. There is a role at the Hub Daily Briefings to be able to access the ONE database and to check the names, DoB, etc and personal details that have been recorded in Missing reports, Police Logs or screening tools. From this database education are also able to inform the panel of any involvements from Attendance, SEND, Inclusion, Specialist Teachers or Educational Psychology. If the young person is new into City and may not be recorded on ONE, this can lead to a referral to the Child Missing Education team to be followed up.
- 3.3 Currently there is limited capacity for the Education representative to follow up with the information in schools and this is usually just calling or emailing the school to ensure that the information presented at the briefing has been shared. This often has not been the case due to capacity and yet it is crucially important as the young person may present

with behaviour in school as a result of the incident discussed. This can lead to exclusions and subsequently further risk if the protective factor of school is not in place. If there was a full time Education representative in the hub core team, it would facilitate closer liaison with schools ensuring they are better informed of the vulnerable young people and then allow follow up work to take place.

- 3.4 The Education representative would be able to attend relevant Strategy meetings, MACE meetings and other extended panels to be the point of contact for the young person and schools. As many children and young people in care (CYPiC) are discussed, the Education lead would ensure a link to the Virtual School to ensure they are aware of any CYPiC who are discussed and may be vulnerable or at risk.
- 3.5 An Education representative would be able to visit schools to discuss and promote the role of the Exploitation Hub; and promote use of the screening tool. Schools in Wolverhampton would benefit from a named Education professional who has multi-agency knowledge and understanding of exploitation. The postholder will promote training with education professionals and parents. They will also provide a critical link into Pupil Referral Units and for children and young people who are not in any provision. Research highlights the lack of provision for excluded pupils as a major contributing factor as to why children fall through the net and become caught up in violence and criminal exploitation.